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# Casey at the Source?

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WASHINGTON  
**L**et me tell you why I'm scratching my head about my old friend William J. Casey.

In the first Nixon Presidential campaign, in 1960, Bill Casey was known to be the ever-resourceful law partner of Len Hall, the genial G.O.P. chairman. I would write some gut-kicking ad and trust to Casey to set up the committee to sign it.

After the defeat, I found myself blessed with the friendship and business-political loyalty of an amazing trio: Casey, his partner Jack Wells (later Nelson Rockefeller's political manager) and their client, the maverick international oilman John Shaheen. The three shared a zest for combat, a joy in adventurous enterprise and a fierce personal loyalty.

Shaheen was some piece of work. Like his buddy Casey, he started in politics (as Wendell Willkie's press agent) and in World War II ran undercover agents against the Nazis. Johnny Shaheen later went into the oil business, hired young Roy Furmark to fight the Seven Sisters, retained my old p.r. firm to publicize his company's "ring-free" oil, retained Wells and Casey and William Rogers to help build a refinery in Newfoundland at a place called Come-by-Chance. To remember the days of derring-do, Shaheen and Casey formed the Veterans of the O.S.S.

When Casey decided to challenge a right-wing Republican for a Congressional nomination on Long Island, he called me in, and I promptly dragged him to a speech teacher. His delivery improved (those who think he mumbles now should have heard him before elocution lessons), but we lost.

In 1968, Casey and I were together again in the Nixon campaign in the writing-research team. After the victory, I went to the White House as a speechwriter and he waited for the right offer: finally, when President Nixon popped with the chairmanship of the Securities and Exchange Commission, I was able to throw the party welcoming Big Bill to Washington.

He did a good job regulating Wall Street, though he offended Democrats by denying files to Congressional investigators. Bill Rogers brought him over to the State Department as an undersecretary, but when Rogers departed after Watergate, Casey refused to kowtow to Henry Kissinger and found a niche elsewhere.

When the Reagan old-timers wanted a solid political citizen after the Iowa primary loss in 1980, they turned to the gutsy Casey; after the

nomination, Casey pushed aside Ed Meese and installed the more efficient James Baker as chief of staff.

After the Reagan victory, when Casey was denied State but given C.I.A., questions arose about a filched briefing book that had given Mr. Reagan an edge in debate with President Carter. Jim Baker pointed the finger at Casey; I invited the C.I.A. director over to The Times's Washington bureau to thunder back on the record; he surprised us all with his forceful testimony and precise articulation.

Then a few years ago, as the always-gruff Casey turned 70, he turned more than a little testy. When I reported that he and Mr. Baker no longer spoke, he called to upbraid me; when I published the pompous upbraiding, the now-unhappy warrior went into a funk. Last year, the thin-skinnedness became dangerous, as he went clear round the bend of threatening editors with jail for revealing secrets. It struck more than one of his former friends that power and secrecy had corrupted Big Bill.

Against that backdrop, we now consider his present story. He is telling the Congress he was approached Nov.

7 of this year by Roy Furmark, whom he had not seen for six years; after Shaheen's death, Roy became a partner of the Saudi arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi, and passed word that bilked Canadian

investors would soon blow the whistle on the secret arms deal.

Casey is testifying he went immediately to John Poindexter to say that "the security of the operation is at risk." But the national security adviser was on his way to Iceland for the summit; on his return, Casey recommended that Admiral Poindexter consult White House counsel. (That would be Peter Wallison, the late Jack Wells's protégé.) Instead, Admiral Poindexter consulted the military aide who was acting as N.S.C. counsel, who kept mum.

On Nov. 23, two of Casey's aides following up with Roy Furmark wrote a five-page memo likely to be shown to the Senate Intelligence Committee this week. It contains a reference to the diversion of Iranian arms funds to the contras — knowledge of which could be guilty knowledge. Only one day later, goes the Casey version of the diversion, the C.I.A. chief heard about it from Attorney General Meese, who made it public on Nov. 25.

Is this credible? I would believe the old Casey; I am not sure about the new Casey. That is why some of us who would ordinarily rally round now watch and wait. □

## Why I'm scratching my head